

1962 PRESEASON PROGNOSIS

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Detroit Metro Stars

The Stars are loaded in 1962 and the heavy favorite to represent the Junior Circuit in the Fall Classic. Many times they will start five potential .300 hitters and the team, though lacking one super thumper, has good power up and down the lineup. Rookie Tom Tresh will be a great addition offensively although his defense at SS is shaky. Brooks Robinson is a steady hitter at the hot corner and a wizard with the glove. On the mound they have three standout starters in Purkey, Gibson and Spahn while the supporting cast is solid and the bullpen unequalled in the league.

Route 66 Hot Rods

The defending champs won 106 games last year and should do well this year but will need a lot of breaks to overcome Detroit. Their offense is loaded with power and have three potential 40 home run hitters in Frank Robinson, Cepeda and Aaron. The keystone combo of Adair and Aparicio are solid defensively although it would be nice if Luis hit a little more. Their bench is strong and should win them some key games. The quality of the starting staff is good but nowhere near that of the Stars but with Terry Fox and 43-year old rookie Diomedes Olivo, the bullpen is sound.

Frankfort Fortress

The Forts won 104 games last year and ended up in second place but they will have a tough time repeating that feat in 1962 and might even fall to fifth behind the Monarchs and Lions. Outfielder Rocky Colavito has good power and excellent on base potential but the rest of the team has something of an aversion to the base on balls. They have some nice bench/role players such as Vic Wertz, Chuck Essegian and Jerry Lynch. The defense is strong but they will have year-long issues at 1B with Dick "Doctor Strangeglove" Stuart. Ralph Terry is a workhorse as the top starter and swing-man Hank Aguirre will be very valuable but they will need strong contributions from several other pitchers in order to advance in the standings. Dick "the Monster" Radatz and Jack Lamabe are a tough bullpen combo.

West Warwick Monarchs

You can flip a coin between the Monarchs and the Fortress but both have weaknesses as well as strengths. Slugger Harmon Killebrew will lead the hit parade and he is ably supported by the likes of Norm Siebern and Al Kaline. First sacker Joe Adcock has the potential to be a 30-homer guy but he won't get enough playing time behind Siebern. Except for Siebern the infield doesn't hit much and their defense is adequate at best. Big Don Drysdale is a great number one starter on any team but the quality falls off a bit after him. Jack Baldschun is an excellent closer and he'll get some good bullpen support from Chet Nichols, Sam Jones and swingman Chris Short.

East Kenosha Lions

This team could finish anywhere from third to sixth but I'm picking them for fifth. They have problems with the infield and the pitching staff is well below the standards of the better teams in the division. Slugger Tommy Davis is poised for a breakout season offensively and he would be a very adequate full-time left fielder but will be forced to play games at 3B where he is shaky defensively. Actually the manager will need to juggle several players at second and third to get through the season but Maury Wills is an All-Star at SS and Earl Battey one of the better catchers in the league. On the mound they have a lot of arms but no standouts and the rotation will have to be shared among quite a few different pitchers. The bullpen is not strong and will be staffed mainly by swingmen when they are not starting.

Seattle Totems

They surprised last year as a 78-win expansion team and could continue that success in 1962. Except for Leon "Daddy Wags" Wagner they are a little short on power. Several infielders will need to be moved in and out to get through the season and none can hit very well. Albie Pearson is the only full time outfielder other than Wagner and the third position will be filled by several part-timers. Joe Torre has the makings of a fine young catcher but injuries could limit his playing time. Dick Donovan and Ken McBride are both good starters and they will be helped immensely by swingmen Dean Chance and Tom Cheney. Marshall Bridges is an OK closer but they will have trouble filling in the other relief roles.

South River Gladiators

The Glads have some decent power with Willie Mays and Norm Cash but the team OBA could easily be the worst in the league and the pitching staff is not strong. Outfielder Russ Snyder is a decent punch and judy hitter but the third OF spot (after Mays) will have to be filled by a cast of thousands, all of which have certain skills but none of which are all around players. The infield is OK but nothing special and the catching adequate. On the mound Don Lee and Jim Stafford are reasonable starters but behind them is a dearth of real talent. Bobby Bolin and Jack Spring are the best of a mediocre bullpen.

Rossville Hornets

The Hornets lost 109 games in 1961 and should improve on that record but rising above seventh place would be a real accomplishment. All aspects of the team, offense, defense and pitching, are well below the league norms but they do have some good young players though it's unlikely they will star right away. George Altman is the clear leader of the lineup but most of his helpers will either be part timers, decent hitters who can't field or good fielders who can't hit. They have a lot of bodies on the pitching staff but few standouts and nothing approaching an acceptable bullpen.

New York Mets

This incarnation may not achieve the legendary 120 losses of the Casey Stengel crew but they will have a tough time escaping the AL cellar. The pitching staff is woeful and may not have anyone with a year-end ERA under 4.00 and definitely will have more than a few "regulars" over 5.00 or even 6.00. The prospect of two and maybe even as many as

four 20-game losers is a real possibility. The everyday lineup is littered with the castoffs of the other teams with little power or defensive ability and will need to be creatively managed just to get through the season. It would be nice to get Bob Aspromonte and Felix Mantilla into the everyday lineup but both are natural 3B and playing the other in a different position will hurt the defense. Chris Cannizaro has a strong arm but can't play every day and the rest of the catching corps is an open invitation to run wild on the bases.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Lafayette Slims

The Slims won a league high 111 regular season games before losing in the World Series to the Hot Rods and probably won't dominate quite that spectacularly this year but they are the odds-on favorite to get back to the fall classic. Slick fielding Bill White will be forced to the outfield to make room for Pete Runnels, a candidate for the batting title, and the team has good power up and down the lineup but no big bopper. The keystone combo of 2B Bill Maerowski and SS Leo Cardenas is solid offensively and defensively. With White not playing 1B, they have four full time OF's, all of whom could start for probably any other team in the league. On the mound they have three potential 20-game winners in Pascual, Sanford and Jay with a good supporting cast. Bob Elston will handle the bulk of the closer duties and there are several others who can fill in at the other relief roles.

Hampton Road Cruisers

Last year they won 97 games but finished 14 games out and a similar fate may await them in 1962 although it should be a lot closer. They boast four good full-time outfielders but only three can play at the same time. Chico Fernandez has far more power than the average SS although his fielding leaves a little to be desired. The rest of the infield is solid offensively and defensively and Elston Howard is a standout catcher. The team could very well exceed 200 homers for the second year in a row. On the mound, Whitey Ford and Juan Marichal are an excellent lefty/righty one-two punch and the rest of the starting staff is first rate. Southpaw Ron Perranoski and righty Jim Brosnan are very good closers and the supporting cast is top notch.

Salzburg Bishops

The Prelates might have a chance for the post season but need a lot of breaks for themselves and breakdowns from the two teams above. They have cannons at the corners of the infield with Diamond Jim Gentile at first and slugging Eddie Mathews at third. Junior Gilliam is a solid second sacker while Eddie Bressoud and Roy McMillan will share time at SS. Rookie Manny Jimenez will be a welcome addition to the outfield although he is not a strong fielder. The other outfield positions will be manned by a relay of part timers, all of whom are decent. The pitching staff has some live arms such as Sandy Koufax and Bill Monboquette along with several other standouts. Dick Hall and swingman Frank Baumann are the top relievers but there are several fine hurlers behind them.

Los Angeles Surfers

The LA crowd won 89 games last year and could approach that number again or even exceed it but with the competitive nature of the conference, they could also fall back to .500 or below. The team ripples with power up and down the lineup and will often field a lineup where almost every position has 20-homer potential. Injuries will limit Mickey Mantle's playing time but when he is in the lineup, watch out. Gordie Coleman and Frank Malzone will provide the long ball from either side of the infield while SS Woodie Held has a bat much more potent than the average middle infielder. Chuck Schilling has a good glove but weak bat at 2B. The two Jims, Kaat and Bunning, each have 20-win potential while veteran Robin Roberts will contribute greatly in a part-time role. Tom Morgan leads a strong bullpen.

Portland Beavers

Though picked for fifth, the Beavers could move up but would need a real collapse to fall below that level. They have some first rate hitters with Don Demeter, Billy Williams, Felipe Alou and Ken Boyer. Tony Kubek will spend a good part of the season in the Army but when he's in there, the keystone combo of Kubek and Richardson is first rate. Demeter and Alou are two-thirds of a good outfield, but the third spot will rotate several part-timers. On the mound Ray Herbert is terrific but the rest of the starting staff has some control issues. The bullpen is probably the deepest in the league and will cover some of the shortcomings of the starters.

Winter Harbor Seals

The Seals offense has improved greatly from last year and they should score enough runs to be a contender at least for the first division if not the playoffs., that is if the pitching staff doesn't give them up even faster. Both Chuck Hinton and Carl Yastremski are All-Star quality OF's and Bob Johnson is a fine 3B. They have some problems at SS as highly touted youngster Jim Fregosi isn't yet ready for full time play. Tom Haller and Del Crandall are a fine catching platoon and they have enough reliable role players to fill out the lineup. However, then we come to the pitching staff. Don Rudolph is OK as a swingman but the rest of the staff is very short on good control. Promising rookie Sam McDowell might be great down the road but not in 1962.

Fairfax Colts

The second expansion franchise promises to have a better record than the woeful Mets but it will be a major accomplishment if they rise above seventh and could fall below that level very easily. Outfielders Frank Thomas and Roman Mejias will provide most of the power and they have several other valuable role players plus talented rookie Lou Brock. Thomas can play first and third in addition to the outfield but if he does play in the garden, the remaining infielders are almost all weak offensively and defensively. The catchers are a grab bag of mediocre part timers. On the mound the starting staff has some major issues other than swingman Turk Farrell but relievers Don McMahon and Bobby Shantz are top notch

Evanston Elephants

The Pachyderms lost 108 games last year and their two realistic goals in 1962 are to cut the losses to less than 90 and finish ahead of the expansion Colts; much else would be difficult. The batting order is solid in RF, 3B, SS & 2B but both catcher and first will involve a cast of thousands, none of whom are very effective. Highly touted rookie Boog Powell will platoon in LF with George Alusik. Ballhawk Jim Landis will patrol CF but his BA may not exceed .230. Bob Friend is a solid number one starter and Art Mahaffey isn't far behind but way too many starts will go to the likes of Jerry Walker and Mike McCormick. They do have a couple of solid relievers but no one who is outstanding.

Wabash Rivers

The Rivers are almost guaranteed to come nowhere close to the 84 wins they achieved last year and the question is will they avoid 100 losses? They do have some power particularly in the person of first sacker Ernie Banks but the team OBA is not good and too many homers will come with the bases empty. The left side of the infield with SS Zoilo Versalles and 3B Ron Santo will pop a few homers and field well but not hit for much of an average. Ancient Stan Musial will do well at the plate when he is in the game but the rest of the outfielders are not strong. The roster contains 19 pitchers and probably half of them will be called upon to start games. Closer Hoyt Wilhelm is fantastic but how many leads will he be given to protect? The rest of the bullpen is decent but they will need to cover a lot of problems from the starting corps.